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THE

ATLANTIC MONTHLY:

A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics.

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John Sullivan Dwight

OUR DARK AGE IN MUSIC.

The real history of music on this side of the Atlantic is all included in the present century. All that bore the name of music in New England before the year 1800 may be summed up in the various modifications of one monotonous and barren type, the Puritan Psalmody. Its chronicles, quaint as they may be, and full of amusing anecdote, of serio-comic pulpit homilies, and nuts for satirists and jokers, are more interesting as exhibiting one phase of the old Puritan life and manners than as having any significant relation to the growth of music as such, or to any progress here in musical taste and culture. The history would make a readable chapter by itself, exciting many a smile of pity rather than contempt; but it would not show the germs out of which the musical character of New England, such as it now is, has developed. The truth is, our fathers (with exceptions too few and too feeble to hold out) had no belief in music; no respect for it, except as a part of the ritual of religious service, purely conventional, and, as they conceived, a matter of divine injunction. The literal fulfillment of the duty satisfied their consciences; however bad the music, if they only sang, or tried to sing, it was enough. Of music in the sense of art they could not have the least conception.

Yet psalmody, in its best estate, sprang out of the very heart of the Reformation, and Luther was its great apostle. Indeed, the singing of psalms by the whole people in unison had been characteristic of all reformers and schismatics from a much earlier time, including the Arians, the Albigenses, the disciples of Wickliff and John Huss, the Bohemian brethren, etc. It was the plain-song "of the people, for the people and by the people," as distinguished from the more scientific, figural, fugued, contrapuntal, antiphonal music of the Catholic service, in which only trained choirs, and priests, could minister. In the confession of the English Puritans (1571), they say: "Concerning singing of psalms, we allow of the people's joining *with one voice* in a plain tune, but not of tossing the psalms from one side to the other, with intermingling of organs." History can tell us everything about these old tunes and their various setting, except where the tunes, the melodies themselves, first came from. Save in a few instances, no one knows who invented or composed them. Probably they grew and shaped themselves by little and little, in the course of practice, quite empirically, by unconscious instinct, out of a thousand sources: largely out of the old traditional *canto fermo*, the Gregorian tones, etc., of the Catholic church; quite as largely out of snatches of free secular melody that floated in the air; while some came from

the Bohemian Brethren, some were sweets stolen from the early opera, and some were of individual invention. Luther is thought to have composed both the melody and harmony, as well as the words, of several of the noblest and most enduring of the German chorals. It must be remembered that the most secular melodics of those days, the music of the "world's people," whether convivial, amorous, or war-like, had much of the psalm-tune flavor, at any rate, its dullness. Probably many of these tunes camc into their present shape by gradual accretion and piecing out, a phrase from this one and a phrase from that, instances of which process are well known.

To the Lutheran chorals we must turn for the grandest, sincerest, most inspired, most tender, deep, and heartfelt types of pure religious people's melody. It was Luther's musical character and knowledge, together with his many-sided genius, his zeal, his large humanity and common sense, that gave significance and form and pregnancy to the German choral above all other psalmody; to him and his co-workers the world owes these vital germs out of which the whole great German art of sacred music, in its larger forms of motet, oratorio, cantata, etc., has been developed. Where these seeds dropped in genial soil, now stately forests wave, far-echoing leafy avenues of song, through whose responsive, swaying branches sing the winds of heaven in never-ending harmony and fugue. In these small germs lay all the mighty art of Bach and Handel, and their followers, in embryo, waiting for its time. That was the German choral. But our New England psalm-book, — what has developed out of that? Nothing but endless mechanical copies and multiplications of itself, continual breeding in and in, a ringing of idle changes on the same old humdrum meaningless material; books made to sell, which never would have been so multitudinous, strewing the shelves and upper lofts of music stores and singing galleries "thick as the leaves of Vallambrosa," if they had had any soul of art or music in them, or were much better than dead leaves, fit for a general bonfire.

Naturally enough, it was not long before the people's music of the Reformation began to flow in two quite opposite directions: one tending to a positive, a genial, a human and expressive character, with Luther for its type and master spirit, leading up to art; the other, typified by Calvin, negative, ascetic, stern, devoid of beauty and afraid of it, frowning on music as a free and genial spirit. Calvin, it is true, (unlike Zwinglius, who in the early days of the same church had included vocal music as well as organs in his proscription of idolatries), shrewdly saw the advantage of congregational singing in keeping the fire alive in public worship. He had proper melodies prepared (how far original, or from what sources borrowed, we know not) for Marot's Psalms by Franc and other eminent musicians of the day. These were printed at Strasburg in 1545, and were afterwards appended to Calvin's catechism and ordered to be sung in the Reformed church. This Calvinistic psalmody sprcad into Holland, and thence found its way across the ocean to our barren shorcs. While Luther, Walther, Sachs, Senfl, and many more were shaping and devcloping the old German and Bohemian chorals (clothed with perennial charm a century later in the wonderful harmony of Bach), the Psalms were rendered into French verse by Clement Marot and Theodore Beza, and were harmonized in parts, with the melody given to the tenor, in 1561 by Louis Bourgeois; in 1562 by Claude Goudimel, who had lived in Rome and had the honor of counting Palestrina among his pupils; and in 1565 by "that great master of harmony," Claude Le Jeune. Bour-

geois had followed Calvin to Geneva in 1541, and there became cantor in a church, but quarreled with the presbytery, who would not let him introduce a harmonized arrangement of the Psalms in public worship. The singing countenanced by Calvin was without instrument, without harmony, a droning forth by the whole congregation, in untutored, dry, distressing unison, or caricature of that, of the "French tunes," so called, though some of them were German or Bohemian, no doubt. These (a portion of them) were the psalm-tunes that came over with the Pilgrim Fathers, and were first sung December 9, 1620, perhaps on Plymouth Rock (?), — the naked melodies, as they were badly printed in an edition of Ainsworth's version of the psalms, published in Amsterdam in 1612. A few of these tunes made their way to England, and may be found in Ravenscroft and other English psalters. Some of them became known in Germany, and gained a place in German choral-books. Seven or eight of them afterwards had the distinguished honor of being harmonized, as they never have been before or since, and, we may say, immortalized, by John Sebastian Bach, and may be seen in the collections of his chorals. The greatest of these, 371 Vierstimmige Choralgesänge, has been well called "one of those fontal works which are the cause or the inspiration of all that come after them." But if one would find the fullest treasury of choral melodies, we would refer him to Conrad Köcher's Zionsharfe (Stuttgart, 1855), containing 1137 chorals of the German Reformed church, the 150 psalms of the French Reformed church, 359 psalm and hymn-tunes of the English and American church, and 316 of the best melodies of the Romish church.

But we anticipate. We must first glance at our own mother country, and see how the leaven of the Reformation was affecting the parochial music there. Somewhat in a kindred spirit with the German choral, or plain-song, more so in respect of dignity and grandeur than of deep and inward sweetness, were the English, Scotch, and Welsh tunes to which the Psalms were sung during the reigns of Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and Charles I. That was a time when England flourished in the foreground of artistic, learned, contrapuntal, vigorous music; the day of her great cathedral composers, building upon Palestrina, and her fresh, ingenious school of madrigal writers. England had her Elizabethan age in music no less than in literature. Amid so much that is dull, conventional, and monotonous in English music, the names of Tallis and Bird, of Morley, Gibbons, Wilbye, Weelkes and many others form a brilliant galaxy. Many of these did not disdain to harmonize the homely psalm-tune. We must refer to Dr. Burney's stately History of Music, and to Hawkins, for even a sketch of the successive settings and collections that appeared, down to the dark period with which we have to deal. Suffice it to say that metrical psalmody, as practiced in the English parochial churches, had its beginning, or at least became general, about the time of Edward VI. The first English version of the Psalms of David, in a most unpoetic, rough, and gnarly kind of verse, was made by Thomas Sternhold — whom an English writer calls "our Marot without his genius" — and John Hopkins (1549 and 1556). It was "imprinted at London by John Day," in 1562, "with apt notes to sing them withal," and again, with harmony, in 1563. Several metrical psalters with music were afterwards published in Scotland and in England. Some of the tunes are found appended to some old editions of the Bible. In 1579 were published "The Psalmes of David in English meter, with notes of foure partes set unto them by Giulielmo Damon, to the use of the godly Chris-

tians, for recreating themselves, instede of fond and unseemely ballades." Cosyns (1585) published sixty psalms, in six parts, in plain counterpoint, to the melodies which Day had printed before. Then came the "The Whole Book of Psalmes, with their wonted tunes as they are song in churches, composed into foure parts, by nine sondry authors. Imprinted at London, by T. Est" (or Este), "1594." Among the nine appear the names of Dowland, Blancks, Farmer, Allison, Kirby, etc. This gives the melody or plain-song to the *tenor*, after the old Roman fashion, the added parts being *cantus*, *altus*, and *bass*. The counterpoint is simple, note against note, the harmony excellent. In 1594 there was a collection, by John Mundy, of songs and psalms in three, four, and five parts; in 1599 another collection by Richard Allison. Thomas Este seems to have anticipated Ravenscroft in the practice of naming tunes from certain places.

Finally appeared, in 1621, reprinted in 1633, the most complete and altogether most important collection of the kind which England had yet known, Thomas Ravenscroft's "Whole Booke of Psalmes: with the Hymnes Evangelical, and Songs Spiritvall, composed into 4 parts by sundry Authors, to such severall Tunes, as have beene and are usually sung in England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Italy, France, and the Nether-lands: never as yet before in one volume published." Probably, except in Germany, no higher type of harmonized psalmody has appeared before or since. Hawkins tells us that it became the manual of psalm-singers throughout the kingdom; and, in the multitude of illiterate compilations that sprang up on all sides to choke it off, he calls him "a happy man, in many places, who is master of a genuine copy of Ravenscroft's Psalms." Every psalm of the Old Version, besides the Hymns Evangelical, etc., is here printed in full, with a fit tune, in many instances the same tune being wedded to several psalms. The number of distinct tunes is ninety-eight, of which forty are given as "tunes of later date," bearing names like Windsor, York, Low Dutch, etc. the rest being the old or "proper" tunes. The list of authors (arrangers, harmonizers) includes, besides Ravenscroft himself (who was made Bachelor of Music at Cambridge at the early age of fourteen), such names as Tallis, Dowland, Morley, John Milton (father of the great poet), Allison, Bennet, and others, twenty-four in all. The melody, or plain-song, is given to the tenor voice, probably intended to be sung *en masse* by the congregation. Nearly all the psalms are in common measure, and the tunes are without rhythmical divisions, or bars, except between the lines, and are written very simply in notes of almost uniform length. The bass may also be counted as a people's part; while, for the select and cultivated voices of higher range, the more varied, artificial, contrapuntal parts of *cantus* (soprano) and *medius* (or countertenor, for boys) are superimposed. This is simply the old church way of composing in Italy, France, Germany, clothing the massive plain-song with the freer play of parts accompanying. The harmony is chaste, correct, and noble, and the melodic progression of the four parts severally is such as to put to shame the work of our multifarious modern manufacturers of psalmody, although it involves now and then consecutive fifths and octaves, not without example in the highest mastery of Bach himself, but which strike the critical eye more than they offend the ear. Doubtless such a setting of the psalms was too good for the many, and, in those days of half-musical and ignorant parish clerks, who "deaconed out" the lines to feeble groups of voices, it is hardly conceivable that this harmony could have been widely accepted, or have continued long

in use. The assignment of the melody to the tenor would be enough, without other obvious reasons, to account for the short life of such a compilation in the churches. But to the cultivated taste in music the book must have been most welcome, and was probably long cherished, for these things happened just on the turning-point of the decline of the Elizabethan era, when the queen herself played upon the "virginals," when the madrigals were written, and when English gentlemen could take a part in singing them at sight.

This brings us back to our dark period. The Pilgrim Fathers, as we have seen, were innocent of all acquaintance with such psalmody as that of Ravenscroft. They were of the Calvinistic school of singing, as well as of doctrine; without skill in music, they sang, most of them by rote, merely the tunes, without any harmony, from Ainsworth's Psalter, which they brought with them from Holland. Ten years later (1630) Winthrop and his colony of Puritans, not Separatists, still acknowledging the tie that bound them to the English mother church, came better fitted out in this respect. They are supposed to have brought Ravenscroft's book along with them, although we are at a loss to find documentary evidence of the fact. But, as they came here just in the period of Ravenscroft, as they had educated men among them, university men, they must have had some little skill in music in its plainer vocal forms, — enough, at least, to sing from notes. An original copy of Ravenscroft, preserved in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society, has the autograph of Governor John Endicott upon its fly-leaf. It is known that one of the first acts of the fathers was to institute a college, and that its curriculum from the first included systematic musical instruction. Perhaps, in the burning of its library in 1764, some copies of Ravenscroft, or other documents which would have served our purpose, vanished into thin air. At all events it would be hard to answer the question, What setting of the Psalms, if not Ravenscroft's, could have been sung in the planting of the first church in the new Boston? For they must have been familiar with it in the old St. Botolph's. Moreover, the Bay Psalm Book, or New England version (first printed at Cambridge in 1640, again in 1647, and revised in 1650), to which the Ainsworth version very slowly and reluctantly gave way, in its appended "admonition to the reader," gives direction for singing the psalms to the tunes "collected out of our chief musicians, by Thomas Ravenscroft," etc. If Winthrop's people did bring this with them, and if there was musical skill enough, even in a small nucleus of them, to sing from it in parts, then we had represented here, for a brief period, the two diverging tendencies of the great flood of choral song which fired the heart of the people in the days of the Reformation, and of which we called Luther and Calvin the respective types, — the one a genial music, containing in itself a germ, the other an ascetic, merely ritualistic droning and shouting out of tunes, ignoring harmony, and putting away all instruments as an abomination. The latter came with the Pilgrims, and utterly prevailed in all New England churches very soon; the former for a brief period may have had some foothold in the first church of Winthrop's followers. But how very brief! That might have proved the germ of a true musical development, if the whole physical and moral atmosphere, if the Puritan character and spirit of the settlers, if their stern outward necessities and preoccupations, and their yet sterner theology only could have favored! But such seed could not germinate in such a soil. The fathers had no time to study music. Rough realities of actual life, and anxious problems of the life to come, claimed all their thought. They

had other seed to plant in rougher soil; they had to fight off the Indians, deal with heretics, go to daily funerals with solemn length of ceremony, and no end of "gloves and scarfs and rings," as Sewall in his Diary records; and at the same time keep up a chronic struggle with the mother country for their charter and their liberties. What little knowledge they may have possessed in music was soon lost among their immediate descendants, whose meat and drink was stern theology and Bible exegesis. During nearly all the remainder of that century "the air was black with sermons." Music, as such, wore the strait jacket, and was shut up in the dark. It was only in obedience to scriptural injunction, "ordinances," that the people tried to sing their psalms, no other music being for a moment tolerated. Instruments were an abomination. Cotton Mather argued that, "as there is not a word in the New Testament authorizing the use of such aids to devotion, the Holy Ghost does, in effect, declare, 'I will not hear the melody of thy organs.'" Secular music had to hide itself out of hearing, and might not even peep aloud. The ceremonial and martial drum and trumpet, for trainings, proclamations, and processions, were the nearest approach to anything like street music, and probably, in point of art, the patriotic fish-horn of our boys would beat that trumpeting on its own ground. Later, of course, with the arrival of the provincial governors, and with the English church (King's Chapel) and its organist, a few bow instruments, violins, and more especially the "bass viol," or violoncello, were imported and enjoyed *sub rosâ*, as was the "ball" given at the house of Master Enstone, the first organist, which good Judge Sewall prevailed upon the governor not to attend. The judge indeed *once* mentions in his Diary a party "marching throw the streets with viols and drums, playing and beating by turns;" and once he alludes to "my wive's virginals." Other than these, the whole three volumes of that famous Diary of a man, who was a leader in Israel's psalm-singing, contain no mention of any instruments of music, except, of course, the aforesaid drums and trumpets. ("Peace was proclaimed by eight or ten drums, and two trumpets.") Once he records the being "serenaded in the night by three musicians;" but he was too far gone in sleep to listen, and does not tell us what the trio was composed of.

In 1673 "there were no musicians by trade in the colony." The very name musician was one of reproach. For the New England Puritan the only alternative in music lay betweeu psalmody and vulgar ballad-singing, common fiddling, and dancing jigs. This "minstrelsy," which, dating back to the old Danish bards and scalds, had kept the soul of song alive for centuries in England, had sunk so low in her great age of music that, in the thirty-ninth year of Elizabeth, a statute was passed, by which "minstrels, wandering abroad," were included among "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars," — "tramps" is now the word, — and were punishable as such. Cromwell (1656) renewed the ordinance, — though Cromwell in a better sense loved music, — including "fiddlers" in the minstrel category. Ritson, rejoicing in their downfall, quotes with great glee the following lines from a satirical ballad ascribed to Dr. John Bull, oue of the learned Elizabethan musicians: —

> "When Jesus went to Jairus' house
> (Whose daughter was about to die,)
> He turned the Minstrels out of doors,
> Among the rascal company:
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Beggars they are with one consent, —
> And rogues, *by act of Parliament.*"

This prohibitory statute was always available *in terrorem* throughout the colonies.

In a single generation, what little art or skill the founders had was all forgotten. Of Ravenscroft a few of the tunes, but not the harmony, remained, and these were written, eight or ten of them, in the psalm-books and Bible, and sung, of course, in unison, the mere melody, continually shifting and uncertain, for at least a hundred years. Mere melody soon runs to waste, and soaks into the sand of vulgar rote; it requires the saving power of harmony, not poor, mechanical, mere make-shift harmony, but harmony inspired by a creative genius, like Sebastian Bach, developed with fine instinct out of the very heart of the melody, to make the tunes perennial and evermore unhackneyed. Such running to waste was fated in the false conditions of church music here. The few old tunes that were sung by rote, as the hymns were "lined" or "deaconed" out, inevitably became mixed, and altered, and perverted. It even went so far that each person sang the lines to whatever tune came most handy for himself, swerving from the tune set by the leader into one quite different, which resulted in the most ludicrous and maddening jargon. Sewall, in his Diary, makes repeated mention of seven tunes, no more. These are Windsor, Litchfield, Oxford, York, St. David's, Westminster, and Low Dutch. These names (all but one) are from Ravenscroft, as probably the tunes were. Once he says: "I set Windsor tune, and the people, at the second going over, run into Oxford, do what I could." Again, "In the morning I set York tune, and, in the second going over, the gallery carried it irresistibly to St. David's, which discouraged me very much." Once, "We sung all the ordinary tuenes." About the beginning of the eighteenth century the lowest depth was reached. Few congregations could sing more than four or five tunes, and even these the Rev. Thomas Walter relates, "had become so mutilated, tortured, and twisted, that the psalm-singing had become a mere disorderly noise, left to the mercy of every unskillful throat to chop and alter, twist and change, according to their odd fancy, sounding like five hundred different tunes roared out at the same time, and so little in time that they were often one or two words apart; so hideous as to be bad beyond expression, and so drawling that we sometimes had to pause twice on one word to take breath; and the decline had been so gradual that the very confusion and discord seemed to have become grateful to their ears, while melody, sung in time and tune, was offensive; and when it was heard that tunes were sung by note, they argued that the new way, as it was called, was an unknown tongue, not melodious as the old, made disturbance in churches, was needless, a contrivance of the designing to get money, required too much time, and made the young disorderly; the old way good enough." Many church-members were suspended for persisting in singing by rule. It required much preaching to overcome the prejudice. No wonder that this scandal led to the rise of a small party of "anti-psalmists," who were opposed to any singing, interpreting the divine exhortation to "make melody in the heart" to mean that we are not to make it with the voice aloud. These were soon brought under discipline by the stalwart treatment of the clergy, who ruled all.

But in the mean time had come the Revolution of 1688, and the arrival of the Provincial Charter in 1692, working a change in matters social, civil, and religious. Old world luxuries and fashions came in, some literature (not theological) and science. Music also burst its bonds, or felt them loosened, and began to sing a little out of its own simple heart. In 1690 the first music was printed in Boston, thirteen tunes in two-part harmony. Thirty years later several clergymen made efforts to encourage better singing. The reaction was in

favor of good music, — at least, technically good, — and scientifically harmonized, though still cut short to the Procrustes bed of psalmody. But even then, and more or less down to a time within the recollection of some old singers of the present day, however properly composed, the tunes in practice underwent a barbarous inversion of the parts (far different from double counterpoint), the part for tenor being sung above the alto and soprano! "Have we not heard it with our ears?" This barbarism kept in vogue until about 1825; and not without much controversy were the voices remauded severally to their proper parts, the soaring shrill sopranos and high straining tenors — heroines and heroes of the village choirs and singing-schools — clinging bravely to what they had so long regarded as their rightful, proud distinction.

But soon, with a Queen's Chapel here in Boston, the organ was to lend solemn beauty to the service. With what suspicion that "box of whistles" had been dreaded and excluded! How Cotton Mather had denounced it! And good Judge Sewall, after a visit to Oxford, Eng., writes: "I am a lover of music *to a fault;*" yet he was made uneasy by the music in the church, where "the justling out the institution of singing psalms by the boisterous organ" disturbed him as "something that can never be answered to the great Master of religious ceremonies." The first organ in New England was that offered by Thomas Brattle to the Brattle Street Church, and there, on principle, declined with thanks, in 1713, aud then passed over to the Chapel and accepted, although it is said to have lain seven months in the porch before they ventured to unpack it. The next year the wardens wrote to England to invite Mr. Edward Enstone to come over and be the organist, at a salary of thirty pounds per annum, which sum, "with other advantages as to dancing, music, etc." (of course some *secular* music could be smuggled in with the rest), "we doubt not will be sufficient encouragement." He began his duties by Christmas, 1714. To the Puritan neighbors that Chapel must have been a haunted house. Yet one can easily imagine many a younger spirit creeping within its porch to listen with wonder and delight. It was not long before one young Bostonian, Edward Bromfield (1745), actually built an organ which was thought to surpass any yet heard here from abroad, and was the wonder of the day in all these colonies. From that time organs began to creep iuto the churches, and with them organists, who, of course, did something to enlarge the meagre repertory of a people which did not know music even enough to hate it.

If the period from 1620 to 1690 was, musically, one of total darkness, the second period, to which we have just alluded, that of the provincial governors, exhibits the first slight signs of a gray penumbra, gradually growing thinner. Now appear more positive tokens of approaching dawn, for we have reached our Revolution of 1775, a period of free thought and inquiry. The struggle for self-government was a general quickening of the mind, and made men less afraid of new ideas, and arts, and ornaments of life. In music, to be sure, the progress was for a long time confined to psalmody. But now the reaction against "lining out" was final. Better collections were published, more carefully arranged, with short treatises on musical grammar, and with rules for singing. It was about this time (1774) that that eccentric genius, William Billings (born in Boston, October 7, 1747, died September 26, 1800), taught a singing-school in Stoughton, with forty-eight members, the best school then known. That genuine old New England institution, the singing-school, began about 1720. It was the chief form of social

intercourse — shall we say "society"? — in all the country villages; and in it psalmody, and gossip, and flirtation, we may well conceive, were learned together, or practiced without learning. Billings invented a new way of setting hymns and anthems, which was called the "fuguing style." It became extremely popular because of its vivacity, the voice parts moving in a sort of mutual imitation (not *fugue* properly), in quick time, chasing one another round. O Mather! O Judge Sewall! The grave old heavy psalmody was startled and danced out of its sobriety. Here was a music that was found exciting; a lively rhythmical protest (for men had been drinking of the new wine of liberty) against the dry and dreary old conventionalism; a music flattering to the sense and a relief to the imprisoned spirit. Whether it appealed to any deep religious sentiment or not, it set the singers in good humor, and responsive to the exhortation that we "make a joyful noise." Billings was exceedingly prolific in this kind of composition, and had imitators, some of whom "out-heroded Herod" in their ventures on the sea of bold "originality" and native "inspiration." His music had a flavor of its own, and showed a certain rude native talent and invention. Fugue it was not in any right artistic sense; of all that he was ignorant. What a godsend it would have been to him, what would he not have thought, what possibly have done, had there, by any chance, fallen into his hands some fugues or other compositions, some harmonized chorals even, of Sebastian Bach or Handel! See how he rhapsodized, in one of his "spread-eagle" prefaces, about his new music: —

"It has more than twenty times the power of the old slow tunes; each part straining for mastery and victory, the audience entertained and delighted, their minds surprisingly agitated and extremely fluctuated; sometimes declaring for one part and sometimes another. Now the solemn bass demands their attention, next the manly tenor; now the lofty counter, now the volatile treble. Now here, now there, now here again. Oh, ecstatic! Rush on, ye sons of harmony!"

Indeed, it seems to have been a sort of musical horse-race. But there was this gain at all events: music was at last listened to *as music*, and not alone as ritual; it was thought worth the while in itself; there was a chance that it might come to something really musical in course of time. It was essentially a secular reaction against plain, solemn psalmody; but all within the house of worship, the choristers, drunk with the new wine, setting themselves up on their own account to do their part in the public service; no strait jacket any longer, but a general "sunburst," and a breaking loose of the imprisoned schoolboys.

So much for Billings. But of course it caused some scandal, and the elders shook their heads. Joel Harmon, in his Sacred Minstrelsy, published at Northampton in 1809, denounced the reigning fashion as, "a tasteless, heartless, trivial and irreverent jargon." Still earlier, in 1791, Samuel Holyoke had published his Harmonia Americana, containing (as did Harmon's book) tunes more solemn in style, more correct in harmony, and more appropriate to church use than the "fuguing" skirmishes. These, followed up by the Bridgewater collection in 1812, the Handel and Haydn Society's in 1822 (edited by Lowell Mason), and many others, gave a new turn to the whole subject, and led the way to what is now known and used as psalmody. But first there was a long and lively controversy between what was called the "Old" and the "New School," the "Old Hundred Singers" and the "Fuguists." Billings, in his small way, was the Wagner of his day and generation.

Meanwhile, to obviate the confusion

of the whole congregation singing or droning out of tune and time, in its untutored zeal, the church choir came in fashion, well enough in the emergency, however questionable in the long run. After the Revolution, one of the fruits of Billings's singing-school appeared in the formation of the Stoughton Musical Society (November 7, 1786), the earliest in New England, and first harbinger of Boston's Handel and Haydn Society. Then a host of on the whole respectable psalm and anthem makers sprang up, who treated the matter seriously and with some skill, not slighting the good old tunes, and studying to harmonize the tunes correctly. Enough to mention names like Holden, Gram (the first German to engage here in such work, — no German would have done it anywhere else), Holyoke, Kimball, Mitchell, Selby, Sumner, blind Oliver Swan, the sweet singer who wrote China, Sinful Mary's Tears, and other songs that were long popular. Especially is it worth noticing that, in the very same year (1805) in which a Vermont composer, Ingalls, brought out a phenomenal collection of his own tunes, after the Billings type, there appeared also "The Salem Collection of *Classical* Sacred Music, in three and four parts," in which we find the names not only of Luther (several times), John Milton, Dr. Arne, Kirby, Dr. Madan, but Purcell, and several things arranged from Handel, showing a taste among the "appreciative few" as far advanced for that day as the taste for Bach and Robert Franz to-day. This Salem book, however, was not the first to dip into the classics and give us some diluted foretastes of the masters in exceedingly small cups. Already, in 1795, had appeared The Massachusetts Compiler, by Hans Gram, Samuel Holyoke and Oliver Holden, containing psalm-tunes, choruses, and solos, "chiefly selected or adapted from modern European publications," among which are pieces arranged from Handel, Purcell, Dr. Arne, etc. "Let the Bright Seraphim," with nothing but an unfigured bass accompaniment, is one of the solos; and once a now familiar face peeps out from Haydn's symphonies, under the title of Futurity, "arranged for three voices, by H. Gram, from a late instrumental composition of the celebrated Mr. Haydn." This honest but obscure musician, all the way from Germany, a *rara avis* here, could not have breathed in this close atmosphere had he not brought with him some airs from Vaterland. Probably the choir-singing movement reached its culmination and its best in the then famous Park Street choir, out of which, and other elements, the oratorio in Boston drew its first recruits.

And here we are, well into the nineteenth century, and nothing yet but psalmody! Nothing that properly can count in the history of music here *as art*. The distinctively New England, homespun psalm-tune contains no germs of musical progress, nothing which by thematic development or genial contrapuntal treatment could lead up, like the German choral, which was *kern-melodisch*, into higher and larger forms of art, — the oratorio, motet, passion, sacred cantata, and Te Deum. All our music before 1800 was but conventional religious ceremony, ritual in fact, performed more from duty than from love, and carefully forbidden to assert itself in its own right *as* music. The old Puritan mistrust of pleasantness had stripped the tree of leaves, lopped off the spreading branches, and very nearly killed the root. Some root fibres there were left, however, some there must have been, deep down in the hard-trodden soil, in the *undying musical nature of man;* for man has a musical, as well as a religious, a poetic, and an intellectual nature, and no man's humanity can be complete without it. These fibres found some scanty nourishment in the church choir and village singing-school, in the mere joy of pro-

ducing musical tones, and tasting some thin juice of melody, with the surprise of now and then a pregnant and suggestive harmony; in the warlike and official drum and trumpet, spiced and quickened later by the fife; and possibly in some secular reaction of dance tunes, sentimental melodies, and frivolous or vulgar comic songs and ditties; certainly, after the Revolution had begun, in patriotic airs and military strains. Thus there was, on the one hand, a very dull and sanctimonious music; on the other, in the course of time, a very shallow, frivolous and popular reaction. Neither kind contained the principle of musical development, — we mean *historically*, — although *philosophically* out of one tone can be developed all tones, and indeed the whole great art of music in all its least and largest forms.

Music, for us, had first to be imported from an older and a richer soil. Mere psalm-singing and psalm-book making never could prepare a soil in which great music could take root. Another impulse and another kind of seed were indispensable. We had to wait for the meeting of more vital elements. A few years longer, and there came to us another German, a musical man of mark, from Haydn's orchestra, Gottlieb Graupner, the first to gather together in the old Puritan town the small beginning of an orchestra, and plant the seeds of a first love for Haydn's and for Mozart's symphonies. At the same time there came a musician of the English school, a learned organist, the portly Dr. Jackson, as well as other English organists and choir-directors. These, with a corps of voices from the Park Street choir, first made it possible to undertake an oratorio, to found a Handel and Haydn Society in 1815, and to enter into practical acquaintance, deepening into enthusiastic love, with some of the great masters.

John S. Dwight.

THE ANCESTRAL FOOTSTEP:[1]

OUTLINES OF AN ENGLISH ROMANCE.

PREFATORY NOTE.

SHORTLY after the publication of Septimius Felton, I printed in the Atlantic Monthly for October, 1872, an article which traced with some particularity, as its title indicated, the History of Hawthorne's Last Romance. The romance therein referred to was the Dolliver, in which Septimius Felton had apparently at last been merged by the author. He lived long enough to complete only the first chapters of The Dolliver Romance, which were published in this magazine soon after his death. Subsequently his widow began to prepare for the press the unfinished manuscript of Septimius Felton, but, before that task had been carried out, her own death arrested it, and the work was completed by her daughters.

In the article which has just been mentioned, the view was advanced that Septimius Felton had been the outgrowth of a project, formed by Nathaniel Hawthorne during his residence in England, to write a romance, the scene of which should be laid in that country; and that this project had afterwards been abandoned, giving place to a new conception in which the visionary search for means to secure an earthly immor-

[1]

tality was to form the principal interest. The two themes, of course, were distinct and separate, but, by a curious process of thought, one grew directly out of the other; the whole history forms, in fact, a chapter in what may be called the genealogy of a romance. There remained, after Septimius Felton had been published, certain manuscripts connected with the scheme of an English story, the contents of which I described in general terms, in discussing this question of the origin of the book. One of these manuscripts was written in the form of a journalized narrative; the author merely noting the date of what he wrote, as he went along. The other was a more extended sketch, of much greater bulk, and without date, but probably produced several years later. It was not originally intended by those who at the time had charge of Mr. Hawthorne's papers that either of these incomplete writings should be laid before the public; because they manifestly had not been left by him in a form which he would have considered as warranting such a course. But since the second and larger manuscript has recently been announced for publication, under the title of Dr. Grimshawe's Secret, it has been thought best to issue the present sketch at the same time, so that the two documents may be examined together. So far as I am aware, they are the only fragments of imaginative composition by Mr. Hawthorne hitherto unpublished, and their appearance places in the hands of readers the entire process of development leading to Septimius and The Dolliver Romance, which I outlined in 1872. They speak for themselves much more efficiently than any commentator can expect to do; and little, therefore, remains to be said beyond a few words of explanation in regard to the following pages.

The Note-Books show that the plan of an English romance, turning upon the fact that an emigrant to America had carried away a family secret which should give his descendant the power to ruin the family in the mother country, had occurred to Hawthorne as early as April, 1855. In August of the same year he visited Smithell's Hall in Bolton le Moors, concerning which he had already heard its legend of The Bloody Footstep, and from that time on, the idea of this footprint on the threshold-stone of the ancestral mansion seems to have associated itself inextricably with the dreamy substance of his yet unshaped romance. Indeed, it leaves its mark broadly upon Sybil Dacy's wild legend in Septimius Felton,[1] and reappears in the last paragraph of that story. But, so far as we can know at this day, nothing definite was done until after his departure for Italy. It was then, while staying in Rome, that he began to put upon paper that plot which had first occupied his thoughts three years before, in the scant leisure allowed him by his duties at the Liverpool consulate. Of leisure there was not a great deal at Rome, either; for, as the French and Italian Note-Books show, sight-seeing and social intercourse took up a good deal of his time, and the daily record in his journal likewise had to be kept up. But he set to work resolutely to embody, so far as he might, his stray imaginings upon the haunting English theme, and to give them connected form. April 1, 1858, he began; and then nearly two weeks passed before he found an opportunity to resume, April 13th being the date of the next passage. By May he gets fully into swing, so that day after day, with but slight breaks, he carries on the story, always increasing in interest for us who read as for him who improvised. Thus it continues until May 19th, by which time he has made a tolerably complete outline, filled in with a good deal of detail here and there. Although it is cast in the form of a regular nar-

[1] See page 111 of Septimius Felton, as originally published in 1872.

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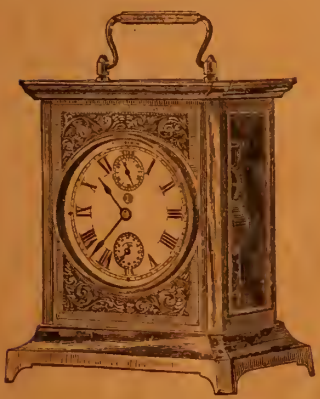

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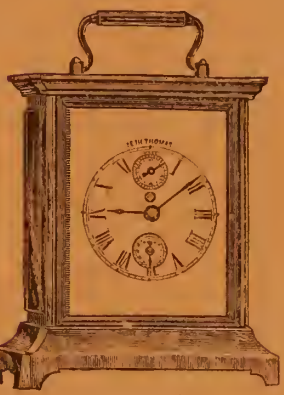

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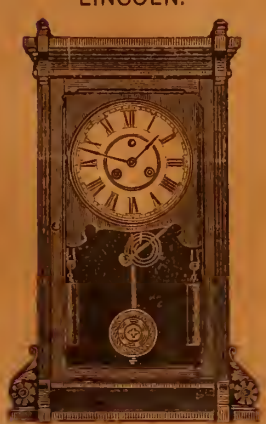

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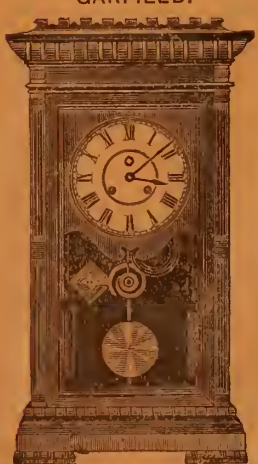

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